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ABSTRACT

The two hypotheses of this study were: (1) low vocational aspirations of lower middle class and disadvantaged students are related to their limited awareness of professional occupations; and, (2) disadvantaged inner city students, due to their broader occupational exposure, will have higher aspirations than suburban and lower middle class students. The purpose of the study was to determine whether the vocational aspirations of disadvantaged and lower middle class inner city students were higher than those of their peers in the suburbs and rural areas, and whether presentation of occupational information in an informal small group setting would influence the vocational aspirations of all three groups. The subjects were sixty black inner city and suburban white lower middle class students. Haller and Miller's Occupational Aspiration Scale was used to measure the students' levels of vocational aspirations. Data showed no difference among the vocational aspirations of inner city, suburban, and rural students; and that the presentation of occupational information will have no influence on the aspirations of the students. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (KG)

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"AN INVESTIGATION OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN DISADVANTAGED AND LOWER MIDDLE CLASS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ON SELECTED DIMENSIONS OF OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS"

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In co-operation with local South Western Michigan School Districts

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Introduction

Students are frequently ill-prepared to make vocational decisions because they lack experiences and have insufficient knowledge about vocations and possible alternatives. They also tend to be limited in their vocational aspirations because of limited exposure to available occupations.

Schools have long been aware of the inadequate exposure of individuals to the world of work. Although they have tried to raise the vocational aspirations of the students through occupational courses, vocational guidance, and by including occupations units within subject areas, success has been very limited.

Purpose of the Study

The present study investigates the influence of occupational exposure on the vocational aspirations of inner city, rural, and suburban disadvantaged and lower middle class high school youngsters. We also intended to test effects of occupational aspirations of selected students.

Related Literature

As evidenced by several authorities, occupational information has been seen as vital to the vocational aspirations of children. O'Hara stated, Children will be vocationally deprived if they do not have access to a full range of occupational information.(4) Miller and Haller brought out the fact that ignorance about the higher vocational offerings tend to limit the aspirations of children.(3) They also pointed out that occupations are chosen on the basis of the information individuals know about the world of work. If their knowledge is restricted to the low prestige occupations, they are forced to choose among these occupations.(4) Henson, Miller, Sexton, Stevic and Uhlig also conveyed the idea that the lack of a full range of occupational and career information tends to limit the vocational aspirations of young people.(2,3,5,&6)

Objectives

The purpose of the present study will be; 1. to compare the vocational aspirations of disadvantaged and lower middle class inner city, suburban and rural high school youngsters; 2. to see if the presentation of occupational information in an informal small group setting will influence the vocational aspirations of all three groups.

The study assumes that disadvantaged and lower middle class students have low vocational aspirations because of their limited occupational awareness, because they are

somewhat isolated from the mainstream. They are not exposed to a wide range of role models. Also, the disadvantaged inner city children have more exposure to occupations than suburban and rural lower middle class students and will have slightly higher vocational aspirations, because of the highly mechanized and industrialized environment.

It was hypothesized that expanding the occupational awareness of middle and high level occupations of the disadvantaged and lower middle class students in an informal group setting would tend to influence their occupational aspirations. It was further hypothesized that disadvantaged inner city students, due to their occupational exposure (of city), will have a higher occupational aspirational level than suburban or rural lower middle class student.

Procedure

Subjects: High school students from three Michigan school districts were used. One group of students were black disadvantaged from inner city, one group of students were white suburban lower middle class.

There were approximately 60 students in the total study. The students, boys and girls, were randomly selected from a common study hall period at each school. The 20 students at each school were randomly divided into a control group and an experimental group. There were 10 students in each group.

Measuring Instrument; Haller and Miller's Occupational Aspiration Scale (OAS) is the instrument that was used to measure the students level of vocational aspirations. The OAS is an eight item multiple choice test, in which the subjects were instructed to select one of ten alternative occupations. The OAS is based on the National Opinion Research Contents (NORC) study of the prestige of 90 occupations. Thescores range from 72 being the highest and 0 being the lowest scores possible. Haller and Miller reported test-retest and split reliabilities of .77 and .80 respectively with concurrent validity coefficient of .62 for the test, based on a correlation with the North-Hatt Test.

Method; Pre-test of OAS was given to the control and experimental groups at the same time. The test was read aloud.

The study consisted of six one period meetings, two of which were used for the purpose of administering the pre and post test. The experimental groups experienced the following four sessions of occupational information.

1st session- General occupational information given and structuring of the group.

2nd-4th session- Taped. Occupational information was presented at the beginning of each session followed by a discussion. Each tape consisted of ten occupations under the headings of service, business and scientific occupations. The following information was given about each occupation; 1) description of the work done; 2) requirements for the occupation, such as, the skills and education required; 3) opportunities for advancement and lastly, the salary scale.

The Post-test of the OAS was administered in the same manner as the pre test.

Null Hypotheses HO_1 - there is no difference among the vocational aspirations of students from inner city, suburban and rural communities.

HO_2 - the presentation of occupational information will have no influence on the vocational aspirations of the students.

Results

Inspection of table 1 shows that we can reject the null hypothesis at the .01 level of significance using the Krushal Wallis one way analysis of variance. This data does support our hypothesis that occupational exposure enables disadvantaged inner city students to have higher vocational aspirational levels than suburban and rural students.

Inspection of table 2 shows that we must accept the null hypothesis for the individual experimental groups at the .05 level of significance using the Mann-Whitney U Test.

Further inspection of table 1 shows the largest difference of the mean was achieved by the inner city post test, experimental vs control group, and their control group's pre vs post test.

Table 1

MANN-WHITNEY U TEST COMPARING THE INFLUENCE OF OCCUPATIONAL INFORMATION ON THE VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF INNER CITY, SUBURBAN AND RURAL STUDENTS. ALSO SHOWS MEAN DIFFERENCES.

	STATISTIC	INNER CITY	SUBURBAN	RURAL
PRE TEST EXPERIMENTAL VS. CONTROL	X	-1.7 (N=20)	-.5 (N=23)	-.1 (N=20)
	U	44.0	62.5	40.5
POST TEST EXPERIMENTAL VS. CONTROL	X	+20.1 (N=20)	+2.3 (N=15)	+4.9 (N=19)
	U	8.50*	26.0	25.5
PRE VS. POST TEST EXPERIMENTAL	X	+6.9 (N=19)	-6.8 (N=18)	+8.4 (N=20)
	U	33.5	49.5	30.0
PRE VS. POST TEST CONTROL	X	-11.5 (N=18)	-4.0 (N=20)	+3.6 (N=19)
	U	22.0	38.0	30.5

(*SIG.> AT THE .05 LEVEL)

Table 2

KRUSKAL-WALLIS ONE WAY ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE COMPARING VOCATIONAL ASPIRATIONS OF INNER CITY, SUBURBAN AND RURAL STUDENTS.

PRE TEST	SUM OF RANK	H
INNER CITY	(23) 276.0	5.26*
SUBURBAN	(20) 210.0	
RURAL	(20) 210.0	

(*SIG. < 4.60, .01 LEVEL)

Disadvantaged students because of living in a city have more exposure to occupational offerings than non-city lower middle class students according to our findings. This seems to reinforce the theory of Miller and Haller that ignorance about the higher vocational offerings tend to limit the vocational aspirations of students.

The occupational information treatment seemingly did not significantly raise the vocational aspirations of the students tested. We feel that the following variables may have had some adverse effects:

1. The length of time was too limited for the occupational information treatment.

2. Student discontentment at the inner city school was probably responsible for the substantial decline in their post test of the OAS.

3. The race of the counselor being different from the group at the suburban schools, might have been responsible for the decline on the post OAS.

4. The size of the sample was definitely too small. The use of 100 students, 33 at each school would likely have given better results.

5. There were inadequate facilities for administering the post (OAS) at one school (suburban school).

6. Because of the high educational requirements and extensive training, the occupational treatment given the students might have caused the students to score lower on the post OAS. This occurred in the suburban experimental group. This has implications for educational awareness.

Implications for Education

Contrary to our original hypothesis, we find it significant that occupation information can sometimes lower as well as raise vocational aspirations. Educators need to get away from their present method of superficial and academic orientation to occupational information. They need to develop a more relevant experiential approach in order to meet the vocational needs of todays youth.

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